



MISSION STATEMENT

*The Somerset County Park Commission
is committed to excellence in promoting
stewardship of land and resources,
providing outstanding recreation opportunities
and leisure services, and fostering
an environment which is service oriented
and responsive to public needs.*



**Somerset County
Park Commission**

Colonial Park • Duke Island Park • North Branch Park • Lord Stirling Park
Green Knoll Golf Course & Tennis Center • Quail Brook Golf Course
Spooky Brook Golf Course • Warrenbrook Golf Course & Park • Woodfern Farm
Sourland Mountain Preserve • Washington Valley Park • Leonard J. Buck Garden
Watchung Mountain Greenway • Little Brook Sanctuary • South Branch Reserve
Neshanic Valley Golf Course • North Branch Greenway Park
Raritan River Greenway • East County Reserve • Chipman Tract
Ralph T. Reeve Cultural Center • Torpey Athletic Complex

Somerset County Park Commission

PO Box 5327, North Branch, NJ 08876

www.somersetcountyparks.org

Parks

Colonial Park Rangers	732 873-2695
Duke Island Park Rangers	908 722-7779
Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park	908 766-2489
Lord Stirling Stable	908 766-5955
North Branch/Headquarters	908 722-1200

Golf Courses

Green Knoll	908 722-1301
Green Knoll Pitch & Putt	908 722-1302
Neshanic Valley	908 369-8200
Quail Brook	732 560-9528
Spooky Brook	732 873-2242
Warrenbrook	908 754-8402
Tee Time Reservation Service	908 231-1122

Recreation

Colonial Park Putting Course and Paddle Boats	732 873-8585
Colonial Park Tennis	732 873-2695
Green Knoll Tennis	908 722-1303
Picnic & Athletic Field Permits	908 722-1200 ext. 225
Therapeutic Recreation	908 526-5650
Warrenbrook Pool	908 754-8404

Gardens

Buck Garden & Wedding Photos	908 234-2677
Rose Garden & Wedding Photos	732 873-2459
Perennial Garden/Arboretum	732 873-2459

Individuals with speech or hearing impairments may use the Relay Service at 711.



Welcome to the Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park



**Somerset County
Park Commission**

Environmental Education Center at Lord Stirling Park



Lord Stirling Park is in the western part of the Great Swamp, adjacent to the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The 950 acre park contains two sections. The Environmental Education Center trails are open for pedestrian hiking. Lord Stirling Stable offers trails open only for horseback riding.

The Environmental Education Center Operations

The Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Science department maintains and operates the 18,000 square foot building and



over 450 acres of natural lands at the Environmental Education Center. The Park Commission's naturalists maintain offices at the Environmental Education Center and conduct many hundreds of programs each year for schools, families, individuals, and organizations interested in environmental education, the natural world, historical and cultural activities, and outdoor education. These programs are offered at the Environmental Education Center, at other Somerset County parks, and around New Jersey. The Environmental



Science department also handles thousands of telephone and personal inquires concerning animal and plant identification, local environmental concerns, information about other parks and natural areas, and access to governmental services. Winter/

Spring, Summer, and Fall Program Guides are available at all Somerset County parks, libraries, or by calling 908 722-1200.

Facilities and Services



There are 8 1/2 miles of hiking trails with more than three miles of boardwalk. Two wildlife observation blinds and two observation towers are located along the trails. The Special Use Trail, which is behind the Environmental Education Center building and along the banks of Branta Pond, is home to gardens of herbs and native plant varieties that provide a sharp contrast to the natural plant communities in the rest of the park. The building contains classrooms and meeting rooms that are used by community and governmental organizations for environmental meetings and programs. The bookshop contains books and gift items relating to the environmental programs and topics offered at the Center. The library has a collection of environmental and history books, periodicals, and videos, and also maintains current listings of environmental positions and internships around the country. An auditorium is used for lectures, public meetings, concerts, and special events. An exhibit area has an ongoing schedule of temporary exhibits and art shows. A permanent collection, *Secrets of the Great Swamp*, contains a series of displays telling the story of the Great Swamp from prehistoric times to the present.

The Land

A variety of animal habitats and plant communities are present in a relatively small area and are accessible through the trail system. Marshes, swamps, a river, intermittent streams, springs, floodplains, natural and human engineered ponds, fields, and forest are all present in the park. The buttonbush, swamp rose, cattails, rushes, and sedges of the freshwater marshes contrast with the floodplain along the Passaic River, which is dominated by white swamp and pin oak.



The southern portion of the park (near Lord Stirling Road) is comprised of abandoned farm fields in various stages of succession. These are prime areas to find vivid

displays of wildflowers. The central portion of the park is characterized by pin oak, blueberry bushes, and sedge hummocks. Pockets of drier woods contain white oak, beech, black birch, and shagbark hickory.

History

The Great Swamp is a wetland remnant of the Glacial Lake Passaic which covered the area approximately 15,000 years ago. The area was much used by Paleo-Indian groups and later by the Lenapes. In colonial times, what is now Lord Stirling Park was part of the estate of William Alexander, the Lord of Stirling, who served as a major general in the Continental Army. The site of his elegant Georgian Manor is located in a nonpublic area of the park that is accessible one day each October as the site of the *1770s Festival*, a celebration of colonial-era New Jersey.



Agricultural activities and logging altered the character of the land during the 19th and early 20th centuries. A proposed international airport was among the potential threats to the land that led to the public acquisition of the Great Swamp. Environmental education programs in Lord Stirling Park have been ongoing since 1971. The building, which was the first solar-heated and cooled public building in the country, was opened in 1977.